

June 21 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1995

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks on Surgeon General Nominee Henry Foster June 21, 1995

The President. Good afternoon. I'd like to begin by saying that I was quite pleased that 57 of the Members of the Senate today voted to allow a simple up or down, yes or no vote on the nomination of Dr. Foster. A strong majority, 57, voted to give him a fair chance and a full vote. But a small minority are using this nomination to dictate a litmus test to the rest of America.

That is wrong. And the American people are not going to understand it. The Senators who voted to deny Dr. Foster an up or down vote did a disservice to a good man. They also did a disservice to our whole system of democracy. And make no mistake about it, this was not a vote about the right of the President to choose a Surgeon General. This was really a vote about every American woman's right to choose.

Henry Foster is qualified to be our Surgeon General. He spent 38 years in medicine. He spent a lot of his time working to improve the health of women and children in poor and rural areas. He's delivered thousands of babies and trained hundreds of young doctors. His efforts to curb teen pregnancy have earned him high praise among Republicans and Democrats. He shares my view that abortion should be rare and safe and legal.

Don't you think it's interesting that we finally found a person in this country who's actually done something, actually done something to try to reduce teen pregnancy, actually done something to try to convince large numbers of young people that they should not have sex before

they're married, who's actually done something to deal with this problem, but because he cannot pass the political litmus test that has a stranglehold on the other party, they cannot even allow a simple vote? Did the Democratic Senate deny a simple vote to their controversial nominees for the Supreme Court, a lifetime job? No.

This man got 57 votes—43 people say no because they are in the grip of people who don't question my right to choose him but question American women's right to choose. It is wrong. What's fair is fair, and he ought to get an up or down vote. He's actually done something about the problem they all claim to be concerned about, and he ought to be given a chance to do something about it for the whole country.

[At this point, Dr. Foster made brief remarks.]

The President. Let me just say one other thing. Let me remind you that the committee approved Dr. Foster's nomination. This should be about whether the President has a right to make this decision if the person is qualified. The committee ruled that he was. The only other question worth asking and answering right now is, are we going to try for another vote? Yes, we are. Do I know what the outcome will be? No, I don't. But I'm not through yet, and we're going to do our best to win it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:36 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Letter to Senator Robert Byrd on Proposed Drunk Driving Legislation June 21, 1995

Dear Robert:

Drinking and driving by young people is one of the nation's most serious threats to public

health and public safety. I am deeply concerned about this ongoing tragedy that kills thousands of young people every year. It's against the law